

Students' Perceptions and Experiences of Using Roblox as A Supporting Tool for English

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ABSTRACT

This study explores students' perceptions and experiences of using Roblox as a supporting tool for developing English-speaking skills at Universitas Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Timur. Employing a qualitative descriptive research design, the study involved ten participants selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings reveal that students generally hold positive perceptions toward the use of Roblox for English-speaking practice, reporting improvements in fluency, confidence, vocabulary, and willingness to communicate in English. Students highlighted that Roblox's interactive and game-based environment provides authentic opportunities to engage in spontaneous communication with international players, thereby reducing speaking anxiety and increasing motivation. However, challenges such as limited vocabulary, unfamiliar slang, and technical issues were also identified. Despite these obstacles, most participants agreed that integrating Roblox into English learning activities creates a low-pressure, immersive, and enjoyable environment that supports language development. The study concludes that Roblox can serve as an effective supplementary platform for enhancing English-speaking competence and fostering learner autonomy in EFL contexts.

Keywords: Roblox; English Speaking Skills; Student Perceptions

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is one of the essential components of English language mastery that plays a crucial role in everyday communication. In the era of globalization, students are expected to communicate effectively in English not only in academic settings but also in broader social and professional contexts. The ability to express ideas clearly, respond appropriately, and engage in meaningful interaction has become an important skill for students in the 21st century. However, despite its importance, many students still experience difficulties in developing their speaking ability. These difficulties are often associated with low motivation, limited opportunities

for real communication practice, lack of confidence, and the dominance of teacher-centered learning approaches that provide minimal opportunities for active language use (Reinhardt, 2021).

In many traditional classroom settings, English learning tends to focus more on grammar, reading, and writing rather than communicative competence. As a result, students may understand linguistic rules but struggle to apply them in real-life communication. This gap between knowledge and practical use of language indicates the need for more interactive and student-centered approaches that emphasize authentic communication and active participation. Without sufficient exposure to real communication situations, students often feel anxious when speaking English and become reluctant to express their ideas.

To address these challenges, technology-enhanced learning and game-based learning have emerged as promising alternatives in language education. These approaches provide interactive and engaging environments that can increase students' motivation and participation (Hsu, 2021; Hung et al., 2021). Through digital platforms, learners are given opportunities to interact, collaborate, and use English in meaningful contexts. Game-based learning, in particular, allows students to learn through experience, where communication becomes a natural part of the activity rather than a forced classroom task. This type of learning environment encourages students to take risks, make mistakes, and gradually improve their speaking ability.

One digital platform that has gained significant popularity among students is Roblox. Roblox is an online interactive game that enables users to create virtual environments, interact with other players, and communicate through both text and voice features. Unlike traditional learning tools, Roblox offers an immersive and social environment where users can engage in real-time communication with players from different parts of the world. This global interaction provides authentic opportunities for students to practice English in natural contexts, which is essential for developing speaking and listening skills.

The interactive features of Roblox, such as role-play, collaboration, and teamwork, support meaningful communication. Students are often required to give instructions, negotiate, and respond to other players during gameplay. These activities mirror real-life communication situations, allowing learners to use English functionally rather than theoretically. Moreover, the game-based environment creates a low-pressure atmosphere where students feel more relaxed and less afraid of making mistakes. This condition is important in language learning, as lower anxiety levels can increase students' willingness to communicate and participate actively (Chen, 2022).

Previous studies have shown that game-based learning can positively influence students' language development. Digital games have been found to improve speaking skills, increase motivation, and enhance learners' confidence through

interactive and contextualized learning experiences (Xu, 2023). In addition, exposure to real-time communication in digital environments allows students to develop listening skills, expand vocabulary, and become familiar with different accents and expressions. These benefits highlight the potential of digital platforms as effective tools for language learning.

However, despite the growing interest in game-based learning, most previous studies have focused on general digital games or controlled classroom applications. There is still limited research that specifically examines the use of Roblox as a platform for developing English-speaking skills, particularly in higher education contexts. Furthermore, existing studies often emphasize learning outcomes but pay less attention to students' perceptions and lived experiences when using such platforms. Understanding students' perspectives is important because it provides insights into how and why a particular learning tool is effective.

In the context of Universitas Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Timur, integrating Roblox into English learning presents an opportunity to provide students with a more engaging and interactive learning experience. By using Roblox, students can gain more exposure to authentic communication, improve their confidence, and develop their ability to speak English more fluently. However, it is also important to explore how students perceive this platform and what challenges they encounter during its use.

Based on this gap, this study aims to explore students' perceptions and experiences of using Roblox as a supporting tool for developing English-speaking skills. Specifically, the study seeks to understand how Roblox influences students' motivation, confidence, and communication practices in English. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights into the potential of game-based platforms in language learning and to offer practical implications for integrating digital games into English language teaching.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Game-Based Learning in Language Education

Game-Based Learning (GBL) has been widely recognized as an effective approach in English language education, particularly in improving students' speaking skills through interactive and immersive environments. This approach transforms conventional classroom activities into engaging learning experiences, which can significantly increase student motivation and participation. By integrating game elements into learning, students are encouraged to actively use English in meaningful contexts, reducing anxiety and promoting authentic communication in EFL settings.

Previous studies support the effectiveness of GBL in language learning. Hsu (2021) states that digital game-based learning enhances student engagement and supports

authentic communication. Similarly, Hung et al. (2021) found that incorporating digital games into EFL classrooms improves learners' motivation and helps reduce speaking anxiety. These findings align with communicative language teaching principles, which emphasize meaningful interaction as a key factor in language acquisition (Reinhardt, 2021).

In addition to speaking, game-based learning also contributes to the development of listening skills. Zhang (2022) found that games that integrate audio and visual elements can improve listening comprehension by providing contextualized input. Likewise, Liu and Chen (2021) reported that gamified listening activities increase students' focus and comprehension accuracy. The combination of visual cues, interaction, and immediate feedback enables learners to process and retain information more effectively.

Development of Speaking Skills through Games

A number of studies have highlighted the role of game-based learning in enhancing students' speaking abilities. Chen and Chen (2021) demonstrated that mobile game-based learning improves students' oral fluency by providing simulated real-life communication scenarios. Such environments allow learners to engage in meaningful interaction while practicing language skills in a less pressured setting.

In a similar context, Sinar et al. (2023) found that Roblox-based learning activities significantly improved students' vocabulary, pronunciation, and speaking confidence. The collaborative and interactive nature of Roblox enables learners to communicate creatively and spontaneously, which supports the development of fluency and self-expression. These findings suggest that digital games create low-anxiety and high-engagement environments where students can develop their speaking skills more naturally compared to traditional methods.

Students' Motivation and Perceptions

Motivation plays a crucial role in successful language learning. Zhou (2024) found that students perceive game-based learning as enjoyable and stimulating, which enhances their intrinsic motivation and engagement. When students feel interested and motivated, they are more willing to participate actively in learning activities. Furthermore, Su (2020) highlighted that game features such as scoring systems, feedback, and collaborative tasks contribute to sustained learner engagement. These elements encourage continuous participation and create a sense of achievement. As a result, students develop a more positive attitude toward learning English and become more confident in using the language for communication.

Challenges and Pedagogical Considerations

Despite its benefits, game-based learning also presents several challenges. Technical issues, unequal access to digital devices, and limited time for

implementation can affect its effectiveness (Hilmun, 2020). These challenges may create gaps in students' learning experiences, particularly for those with limited access to technology.

In addition, the successful implementation of GBL requires both teachers and students to have adequate digital literacy skills. Without proper guidance, game-based activities may become less effective or fail to achieve learning objectives. Therefore, teachers need to carefully design learning activities that balance engagement with clear pedagogical goals.

Hwang and Chen (2021) emphasize that game-based learning should be structured with clear linguistic objectives and supported by continuous feedback. When properly implemented, GBL can move beyond entertainment and function as a powerful educational tool that enhances both motivation and learning outcomes.

Previous Studies

A growing number of studies have confirmed the effectiveness of digital game-based learning in improving EFL students' speaking skills. Sari and Lestari (2023) found that Roblox role-play activities significantly improved students' fluency and confidence in speaking. Similarly, Kurniawan and Ningsih (2022) reported that gamification through Roblox enhanced peer interaction and pronunciation skills among Indonesian university students.

Rahmawati and Fauzan (2021) also found that platforms such as Roblox and Second Life encourage spontaneous communication and help reduce language anxiety. Supporting these findings, Susanti and Hartono (2020) demonstrated that immersive virtual environments provide meaningful opportunities for communicative practice.

In addition, Alzubair (2021) showed that virtual reality-based games improve students' motivation and vocabulary retention in speaking classes. Chun and Smith (2018) highlighted the role of avatars and game interaction in improving pronunciation and pragmatic competence. Yuliana and Saputra (2022) further found that students have positive perceptions of Roblox as an engaging tool that reduces speaking anxiety. Gonzalez (2019) also noted that game-based learning creates authentic and low-pressure environments that support better oral communication.

More recent studies, such as Wijayanti and Putra (2023), reported improvements in students' fluency and confidence through digital simulation tasks. Meanwhile, Miller and Hegelheimer (2017) emphasized that technology-enhanced learning supports learner autonomy and self-correction.

Overall, these studies indicate that digital game-based learning platforms, particularly Roblox, provide effective environments for developing students' confidence, fluency, and communicative competence in English. However, further

research is still needed to explore students' perceptions and experiences in specific educational contexts.

METHOD

Design and Sample

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore students' perceptions and experiences of using Roblox as a supporting tool for developing English-speaking skills. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables an in-depth understanding of participants' views and experiences within their natural learning context. The study was conducted at Universitas Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Timur, Samarinda, Indonesia. The participants consisted of ten university students selected through purposive sampling. The selection criteria included (1) students who had prior experience using Roblox or similar digital games, (2) students who had basic exposure to English learning, and (3) students who were willing to share their experiences openly. These criteria ensured that the participants were relevant to the purpose of the study. Although the sample size was relatively small, it is appropriate for qualitative research, which focuses on depth rather than generalization.

Instruments and Procedures

In qualitative research, the researcher acts as the primary instrument, responsible for collecting, interpreting, and analyzing the data. To support data collection, this study used semi-structured interview guides, observation notes, and reflective journals. The primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews with ten participants. This method was chosen because it provides flexibility while allowing the researcher to explore participants' responses in depth. The interview questions focused on students' experiences using Roblox, including their motivation, confidence, communication practices, and perceived benefits and challenges in learning English.

Each interview was conducted individually in a comfortable and informal setting to encourage open and honest responses. The interviews lasted approximately 5–10 minutes and were audio-recorded with participants' consent to ensure data accuracy. In addition, observations were conducted to examine students' interaction patterns and communication behavior during gameplay. Reflective journals were also used to capture participants' personal insights, including their learning experiences, difficulties, and opinions regarding the use of Roblox in English learning.

Data Analysis

The data in this study were analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis followed several systematic steps, including data transcription, familiarization, coding, categorization, and theme development. First, all interview recordings were

transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy. The researcher then reviewed the transcripts, observation notes, and reflective journals repeatedly to gain a comprehensive understanding of the data. During this stage, meaningful units related to speaking skills, motivation, and learning experiences were identified.

Next, the data were coded by labeling key words, phrases, and sentences representing similar ideas. These codes were grouped into categories, which were then developed into broader themes reflecting students' shared perceptions and experiences of using Roblox for English-speaking practice. To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, this study applied several strategies, including data triangulation (interviews, observations, and journals), prolonged engagement with the data, and careful review of coding and themes. These steps helped enhance the credibility and consistency of the findings. The thematic analysis enabled the researcher to identify patterns and interpret the data systematically, in line with qualitative descriptive research.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings based on data collected from semi-structured interviews with ten students. The analysis focuses on students' perceptions and experiences of using Roblox as a supporting tool for developing English-speaking skills. The findings are organized into key themes and supported by participants' responses.

Frequency of Roblox Use

The findings show that students use Roblox with varying frequency. Most participants reported using the platform several times a week for entertainment, while a few used it daily. For example, R1 stated, "*I play Roblox around 2–3 times a week for relaxation,*" and R4 mentioned, "*About three times a week.*" In contrast, R5 explained, "*I play around 2–4 hours daily,*" and R9 added, "*3–5 hours every day.*"

Although Roblox is not primarily used for learning purposes, the frequency of use indicates that students are consistently exposed to English in informal contexts. This repeated exposure plays an important role in incidental language acquisition, where learning occurs naturally without explicit instruction. Over time, such exposure can help students become more familiar with vocabulary, sentence structures, and common expressions, thereby supporting gradual improvement in their speaking ability.

Roblox as an English Learning Platform

Most participants reported using Roblox as a medium for learning English, either intentionally or unintentionally. Many students joined international servers and interacted with English-speaking players. R2 stated, "*I use Roblox to practice*

communication,” while R5 explained, *“I learned English through role-play in the game.”* Similarly, R10 said, *“I usually join English-speaking servers.”* However, R3 noted, *“No, I don’t use it for learning.”*

These findings suggest that Roblox functions as an informal learning environment where language exposure occurs naturally through interaction. Even when students do not consciously aim to learn English, they are still engaged in meaningful communication. This indicates that learning in such environments is often embedded within activities, making it more contextual and relevant. As a result, students may develop communicative competence more organically compared to traditional classroom settings.

Motivation and Interest in Using Roblox

Students generally expressed positive attitudes toward using Roblox for English practice due to its enjoyable and interactive nature. R5 stated, *“Learning while playing is fun,”* and R6 added, *“Communication feels more real and relaxed.”* R8 also mentioned, *“It is fun and engaging.”* Additionally, R9 explained, *“I feel more confident because I can be anonymous.”*

However, not all participants shared the same level of interest. R3 stated, *“I’m not really interested.”* This indicates that while game-based learning can enhance motivation for many students, individual preferences and learning styles still influence engagement levels. Nevertheless, the overall findings show that the integration of enjoyment and interaction can transform learning into a more positive and meaningful experience, which is essential for sustaining long-term motivation.

Social and Communicative Motivation

The findings reveal that the need for communication during gameplay motivates students to use English. Activities such as teamwork and collaboration require interaction using English. R1 stated, *“I have to use English to join groups,”* while R8 explained, *“Teamwork requires English.”* Similarly, R6 said, *“We are forced to use English to collaborate.”*

This indicates that communication in Roblox is driven by purpose rather than obligation. Students use English not because they are instructed to do so, but because it is necessary to achieve in-game objectives. Such goal-oriented communication creates a meaningful context for language use, which can enhance both engagement and retention. It also reflects authentic language use, where communication serves a real function.

Forms of Communication in Roblox

Students engaged in various forms of communication, including text chat, voice chat, role-play, and negotiation. R1 mentioned, *“I use text chat, voice chat, and*

role-play,” while R9 stated, *“I use both voice and text chat.”* R5 added, *“I communicate when trading items.”*

These diverse forms of interaction provide opportunities for students to practice multiple aspects of language use. Text chat allows for more controlled and reflective communication, while voice chat encourages spontaneous speaking. Role-play and negotiation further enhance communicative competence by requiring students to adapt language based on context. This variety supports the development of both accuracy and fluency in speaking.

Emotional Responses and Confidence

Most participants initially felt nervous when speaking English but gradually became more confident. R1 stated, *“At first I was nervous, but later I became confident,”* while R10 said, *“I felt nervous, then relaxed.”* R2 also mentioned, *“I feel more confident now.”* However, R5 expressed concern, stating, *“I am afraid of making mistakes.”*

These findings indicate that emotional factors play a significant role in language learning. The gradual reduction of anxiety suggests that repeated exposure to communication in a supportive environment helps students build confidence over time. The informal and non-judgmental nature of Roblox allows learners to experiment with language without fear, which is essential for developing speaking skills.

Challenges in Using Roblox

Despite the positive experiences, students reported several challenges, including limited vocabulary, unfamiliar slang, fast-paced speech, and different accents. R2 stated, *“My vocabulary is limited,”* while R1 mentioned, *“People speak too fast and use slang.”* R6 added, *“Accents and vocabulary are difficult,”* and R8 said, *“Fast speech is hard to understand.”*

These challenges reflect the complexity of authentic language use in real-world contexts. While they may initially hinder communication, they also provide valuable learning opportunities. Exposure to varied language input helps students develop listening skills, adaptability, and problem-solving strategies, such as asking for clarification or rephrasing ideas.

Perceived Improvement in Speaking Skills

Most participants believed that Roblox helped improve their speaking skills. R1 stated, *“My fluency has improved,”* while R8 mentioned, *“I get more vocabulary.”* R9 added, *“My pronunciation improved,”* and R6 said, *“It helps in real-life communication.”* However, R3 noted, *“Not really.”*

These responses indicate that students perceive meaningful progress in their language abilities, particularly in fluency and vocabulary development. The interactive and repetitive nature of communication in Roblox allows learners to practice language in context, which supports deeper learning. However, the variation in responses suggests that the effectiveness of the platform may depend on individual engagement and learning strategies.

Development of Confidence and Fluency

Students reported increased confidence and fluency after using Roblox. R1 stated, *“I am more confident now,”* while R8 said, *“I am less afraid of making mistakes.”* R10 added, *“I feel braver speaking English.”* R5 also explained, *“Anonymity makes me more confident.”*

This suggests that the features of Roblox, particularly anonymity and virtual interaction, reduce psychological pressure. As a result, students are more willing to take risks and participate in communication. Increased participation leads to more practice, which in turn supports the development of fluency and overall communicative competence.

Strategies for Effective Use of Roblox

Participants suggested strategies to maximize learning, such as joining international servers, using voice chat, and interacting with fluent speakers. R1 suggested, *“Join friendly servers,”* while R5 said, *“Join foreign servers.”* R6 recommended, *“Use voice chat more,”* and R8 added, *“Speak more often.”*

These responses indicate that students are not only passive users but also active learners who are aware of effective strategies for language development. This reflects a level of learner autonomy, where students take responsibility for their own learning process and seek opportunities to improve their skills. The findings demonstrate that Roblox provides a supportive and engaging environment for developing English-speaking skills. The platform enhances motivation, confidence, and opportunities for authentic communication. Although challenges are present, they contribute to meaningful learning experiences and help students develop adaptability in real communication. These findings suggest that Roblox has strong potential as a supplementary tool in English language learning.

This study aimed to explore students’ perceptions and experiences of using Roblox as a supporting tool for developing English-speaking skills. The findings reveal that Roblox provides a meaningful and engaging environment that supports students’ confidence, motivation, and willingness to communicate in English. These results suggest that game-based digital platforms can play an important complementary role in facilitating language learning beyond formal classroom settings.

One of the key findings of this study is the positive impact of Roblox on students' speaking confidence. Many participants initially experienced anxiety when communicating in English but gradually became more confident through repeated interaction with other players. This finding supports Krashen's (1985) Affective Filter Hypothesis, which argues that lower anxiety levels can facilitate language acquisition. The use of avatars and virtual identities in Roblox appears to reduce learners' fear of making mistakes, allowing them to take risks and experiment with language more freely. This result is consistent with Reinders (2014), who found that digital game environments can reduce affective barriers and increase learners' willingness to communicate.

In addition, the findings highlight that Roblox promotes authentic communication through real-time interaction, collaboration, and role-play activities. Students frequently used English to coordinate with other players, exchange information, and solve problems during gameplay. These communicative practices align with the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which emphasize the importance of meaningful interaction in language learning (Reinhardt, 2021). The immersive nature of Roblox allows students to use English as a practical communication tool rather than merely as an academic subject, supporting Gee's (2004) view that language learning is most effective when embedded in social and meaningful contexts.

From a motivational perspective, the study found that students were more motivated to use English when engaging with Roblox compared to traditional learning environments. The interactive and enjoyable nature of the platform encourages spontaneous communication and active participation. This finding is in line with Zhou (2024), who reported that digital game-based learning enhances intrinsic motivation by combining engagement with learning objectives. Moreover, the necessity to communicate with other players in order to succeed in the game creates a natural and meaningful reason to use English. This supports MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) concept of willingness to communicate, where learners are more likely to use a second language when they feel motivated and confident.

The findings also indicate that students engaged in various forms of communication, such as voice chat, text chat, and collaborative interaction. These activities provide opportunities for practicing both functional and conversational language in real-time situations. Although the frequency of using Roblox specifically for learning purposes was moderate, students still benefited from incidental exposure to English during gameplay. This suggests that informal learning environments can contribute significantly to language development, particularly when learners are actively involved in communication.

Furthermore, the study reveals that students perceived improvements in their speaking skills, including fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, and listening comprehension. Interaction with international players exposes learners to diverse accents, slang, and natural speech patterns, which enhances both their receptive and

productive language skills. These findings are consistent with previous studies indicating that digital game-based environments provide rich linguistic input and meaningful opportunities for output.

However, despite these positive outcomes, several challenges were identified. Students reported difficulties related to limited vocabulary, unfamiliar slang, fast-paced speech, and technical issues such as unstable internet connections. While these challenges may hinder communication, they also reflect authentic language use in real-world contexts. Exposure to such challenges can help learners develop adaptive strategies, such as asking for clarification, paraphrasing, and adjusting their communication style. As noted by Chen and Chen (2021), encountering real-life language variation can enhance learners' communicative competence and listening skills.

Another important finding is the gap between students' positive perceptions and their actual use of Roblox as a learning tool. Although students recognized the benefits of Roblox for improving their speaking skills, not all of them used the platform intentionally for learning purposes. This suggests that without proper guidance, the educational potential of Roblox may not be fully utilized. Therefore, the role of teachers becomes essential in facilitating and structuring game-based activities to align with learning objectives.

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings suggest that Roblox has strong potential as a supplementary tool in English language teaching. Educators can integrate Roblox into classroom practice through structured activities such as guided role-play, collaborative tasks, and reflective speaking exercises. By combining the engaging nature of games with clear instructional goals, teachers can create a more effective and meaningful learning experience. This study demonstrates that Roblox supports the development of English-speaking skills by enhancing students' motivation, confidence, and opportunities for authentic communication. While it should not replace traditional instruction, it can serve as a valuable complementary tool that enriches the learning process. These findings contribute to the growing body of research on game-based learning and highlight the importance of integrating digital platforms into language education.

CONCLUSION

This study explored students' perceptions and experiences of using Roblox as a supporting tool for developing English-speaking skills at Universitas Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Timur. The findings from the interviews indicate that the use of Roblox encourages students to communicate more frequently and confidently, reduces speaking anxiety, and enhances motivation through authentic interaction with international players in a relaxed, game-based environment. Most participants reported that Roblox contributed to improvements in fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary acquisition, and spontaneous communication. The immersive and interactive nature of the platform provides meaningful contexts for

language use, making the learning process more engaging and enjoyable compared to traditional classroom activities. In addition, the social features of the game create natural opportunities for students to practice English while collaborating with others. However, several challenges were also identified, including limited vocabulary, exposure to unfamiliar slang, fast-paced conversations, and occasional technical issues. Despite these obstacles, students demonstrated the ability to adapt to real-world communication challenges and expressed a need for more structured integration of Roblox into formal English learning. In conclusion, Roblox shows strong potential as a complementary learning tool for developing English-speaking skills through experiential and game-based learning. Its interactive and collaborative features promote learner autonomy, authentic communication, and increased self-confidence. Therefore, educators are encouraged to consider integrating Roblox and similar digital platforms into language instruction to enhance student engagement, motivation, and communicative competence in EFL contexts.

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